

# UNIVERSITY *of* MISSOURI

## MISSOURI SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM

### JOURNALISM STUDIES DEPARTMENT

January 31, 2012

Dr. Pam Sloan  
Superintendent  
Francis Howell R-III  
4545 Central School Road  
St. Charles, MO 63304-7113

Dear Dr. Sloan,

Pursuant to the Missouri Sunshine Law (RSMo Chapter 610), I would like to obtain a copy of any and all records and correspondence pertaining to the challenge and/or removal of materials in school libraries and/or classrooms in your school district from January 1, 2008 to present. I have attached the form used by the Boone County School District to initiate book challenges as an example.

I understand that if I seek a copy of this record, there may be a copying fee. Please inform me of that cost prior to making the copy. I can be reached at 573-882-5736.

According to the statute, this request should be acted upon as soon as possible, but in no event later than the third business day following receipt of this letter. If access to the records I requested is going to take longer, please contact me so we can work out a reasonable date. I'll be back in touch in 10 working days if I don't hear from your office.

If you choose to deny the request, then you are required to respond in writing and state the statutory exception authorizing the withholding of all or part of the public record and the name and title or position of the person responsible for the denial.

Thank you for your assistance on this matter.

Sincerely,



Charles N. Davis, Ph.D.  
204 Neff Hall  
FAX: 573-884-5400



## Requests for Reconsideration of Library Materials Form

Title of item \_\_\_\_\_  
Book ☐ Periodical ☐ Other ☐

Author \_\_\_\_\_

Publisher \_\_\_\_\_

Request initiated by \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip code \_\_\_\_\_

Do you represent

\_\_\_\_ Yourself

\_\_\_\_ An organization (name) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_ Other group(name) \_\_\_\_\_

\*\*\*\*\*

1. Did you read or view the entire work?

What parts did you read or view?

2. To what in the work do you object? (Be specific; cite pages, sections etc.)

3. What do you feel might be the reaction of a student reading or viewing this work?

4. For what age group would you recommend this work?

5. What do you believe is the theme of this work?

6. What would you like the library/school to do about this material?

☐ Don't allow my child to check the material(s) out

☐ Return it to the selection committee for re-evaluation.

☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_

7. In its place, what work would you recommend that would convey as a picture and perspective of the subject treated? \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Francis Howell School District  
Challenged Materials Reconsideration Committee Summary

**Summary of Challenged Material Information**

**Type of material (book, video, etc.):** Library book at the middle school level

**Title:** *A Child Called "It"*      **Author:** Dave Pelzer      **Publisher:** Health Communications

**Person Challenging:** Janet Koncki

**Description of objectionable aspects of the material (cite specific words, passages, pages, etc.):**

The parent objects to the amount and detailed descriptions of the abuse and asserts that the physical and mental abuse occurs on almost every second or third page of the book. Mrs. Koncki submitted a challenged material form that cited specific page numbers and passages in the book.

**Rationale for objection:**

The parent objects to this material because they feel it does not meet the requirement of section 3, the Criteria for Learning Resources (parts b, c, f, i, and j) of the Francis Howell School District Regulation 6241.

**Summary of Reconsideration Committee Information**

**Date of Reconsideration Committee Meeting:** Tuesday, September 27, 2011

**Committee Chairperson:** Dr. Travis Bracht, Director of Student Learning

|                           |                                |                               |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <b>Committee Members:</b> | Amy Johnston, Principal        | Stephanie Mayse, Parent       |
|                           | Nicole Huffman, Content Leader | Christa Stockglausner, Parent |
|                           | Kelly Hauquitz, Librarian      | Penney Nieder, Counselor      |
|                           | Margie Wayman, Librarian       | Dr. Scott Pinkham, Teacher    |
|                           | Patrice Feldman, Teacher       |                               |

**Committee Decision:** The committee voted 8 to 1 in favor of the book remaining in the libraries at the middle school level.

**Committee Rationale:** This book is categorized as "young adult" literature; and given the grade spans present in our middle schools, grades 6 through 8, it is reasonable that there are students mature enough to handle reading this particular book while in middle school. It is a book that is frequently checked out in our middle school libraries; and when considering the reviews, reports, blog posts, etc. that are written by students who read it, there is clear evidence that they can handle reading this book. The committee also pointed to part 2, section c of Regulation 6241 that states: "No parent(s)/guardian(s) have the right to determine reading, viewing, or listening matter for students other than their own children."

**NOTE:** Regulation 6241 states that when the reconsideration committee upholds material from challenge, the material cannot be challenged again, at that level, for a period of five years. Therefore, at the middle school level, the fact that this book is included within our libraries cannot be challenged again until September 27, 2016.



InstructionChallenged Materials

## REVIEW OF INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS

Type of material (book, film, pamphlet, etc.): Book (in school library)Title of material: A Child Called "It"Author: Dave PelzerPublisher: Health CommunicationsYour name, address, telephone number: Janet Koncki 27 Lakemont Dr.  
636-926-3251Do you have a child in the school concerned? Yes FHMSComplainant also represents others: No(organization-name) —(other group-identify) —To what part of the material do you object? Cite words, page numbers: Please see attachmentWhy do you object to this material? Please see attachedAre you familiar with the range of materials used in the school system on this topic? No,  
but I will make an effort to do thatDo you approve of presenting a diversity of points of view about this material in the classroom?  
yesShould this be withdrawn from all students? Yes — No —Signature of Complainant Janet Koncki Please see attached 9-6-11  
DatePlease give/send this information to: Dr. Travis Bracht  
Superintendent  
Director of Curriculum  
Address —

**To what part of the material do you object? Cite words, page numbers:**

*I object to the amount and detailed descriptions of the abuse. Please note that the physical and mental abuse occurs on almost every second or third page.*

**p.30** Mother would simply grab me and smash my face against the mirror. -----Then she would order me to say over and over again," I'm a bad boy! I'm a bad boy! I'm a bad boy!"

**p.32** Mother smacked me in the face.---Blood gushed from my nose...

**p.34** I closed my eyes as the oncoming blows began to rock me from side to side.

**p.35** I heard something pop, and felt intense pain in my shoulder and arm. ----she released her grip on my arm, and turned and walked away as if nothing had happened.

**p.36** But Mother continued to roar that I had shamed the family...

**p.38** Mother raged on and on that I had embarrassed the family again. I stood in a daze, as Mother badgered me relentlessly.

**p.40-41** Mother ordered me to strip off my clothes and stand by the kitchen stove. Gripping my arm, Mother held it in the orange-blue flame.--- Mother then ordered me to climb up onto the stove and lie on the flames so she could watch me burn.

**p.47** My clothes had become weathered, torn and smelly.

**p.50** At the house, the dual punishment of hunger (*starvation*) and violent attacks continued.

**p.52** ... she would yank me up by my ears and yell into my face...

**p.55-56** She smeared the (*feces*) diaper on my face-----Mother knelt down beside me and in a soft voice said, "Eat it." ---- My nose struck first. ----- I snorted bits of defecation back up my nose with the blood.

**p.64** She slugged me in the stomach so hard that I bent over ----rammed her finger into my mouth, as if she wanted to pull my stomach up through my throat.

**p.65-66** ----she returned with a small bowl, ordered me to scoop the partially-digested food out of the toilet---I couldn't believe he (*father*) just stood there as I ate the revolting contents of the bowl.

**p.74-75** She got a tablespoon and poured some ammonia into it. ----Mother rammed the cold spoon deep into my throat. ---- feeling as if my eyes were going to pop out of my

---

skull. I fell on the floor, on my hands and knees. ----- and trying to concentrate on the bubble of air stuck in my esophagus.

**p.76** Father stood lifeless as Mother fed me another dose of ammonia.

**p.77** She did make me drink spoonfuls of Clorox-----squeeze the cheap liquid soap (*dishwasher soap*) down my throat and command me to stand in the garage---- diarrhea took hold---- Father, looking on dispassionately, as his son mooned him and as the brown seepage spilled into the bucket.

*I believe you get the idea. And that is only the first half of the book. It continues with stabbings that never get medical attention, hypothermia, abandonment by his father, bullying by his siblings and peers and being gassed.*

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## **Why do you object to this material?**

*I object to this material because it does not meet the requirement of Section 3. The Criteria for Learning Resources, parts b,c,f,i and j, of the Francis Howell School District, Regulation 6241 for Form 6241.*

### **b. Age appropriate material**

*As per the attached review from the School Library Journal, this material is recommended for "grades 9 and up". The St. Charles Public library in all except one location lists this title in "Adult Biography". The review from Teen Ink RAW also qualifies this book as being "for mature readers only".*

### **c. Need and value to the collection and to the curriculum**

*The School Library Journal states that Pelzer's A Child Called It, "falls short of providing understanding of extreme abuse or how he made his journey from victim to victor".*

*The review goes on to recommend another book, James Deem's The 3 NB's of Julian Drew, "as a well-crafted, fictional work that effectively covers much of the same ground".*

### **f. Validity, accuracy, objectivity, up-to-date, and appropriateness of text**

*This story take place in the late 1960's before there was the awareness of the amount of child abuse going on. It took place before there were nurses, counselors and resource officers in every public school. Children today have more resources at their aid and school staff is now being trained to recognize and stop such abuse. Therefore the child in the book had to survive in a world somewhat different than ours today.*

*As for the appropriateness of the text, torturous deeds are never appropriate reading material for youthful minds.*

### **i. High degree of potential user appeal**

*The shock value of this book increases with every chapter. That is why it spent 618 weeks on the Times paperback best seller list and why it has a high circulation in a middle school library. What pre-teen wouldn't want to be shocked by amazingly gross stuff (for the boys) and highly unfair parental drama (for the girls).*

### **j. Artistic quality or literary style**

*Again I refer to the reviews. One states the writing to be "Lloyd Webberian in their (speaking of all three of the author's books) operatic weepiness.*

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**Should this book be withdrawn from all students?**

*No, just those below grade 9. If a younger child wants to read it, I would recommend they read it under the supervision of a counselor.*

*"A Child Called It" needs to be read. This man's story needs to be told, to adults, not children. It was an adult who tortured this child. It was adults who let it go on far too long. It was an adult who abandoned him and it is up to adults to read this book and get involved.*

*For children suffering the same abuse, it offers no solutions or advice. In fact the Mother's abusive behavior continued on with another sibling after Dave Pelzer, was taken out of his Mother's home. What saved this boy was his innate mental and physical strength. May we adults, act like adults, and stop this abusive exposure and tortuous treatment from happening to anyone.*

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Francis Howell School District  
Challenged Materials Reconsideration Committee Summary

**Summary of Challenged Material Information**

**Type of material (book, video, etc.):** Library book at the elementary level.

**Title:** *Scary Stories to Tell in the Dark*    **Author:** Alvin Schwartz    **Publisher:** Harper Collins

**Person Challenging:** Becca Green

**Description of objectionable aspects of the material (cite specific words, passages, pages, etc.):**

The parent objects to the graphic death, corpses, and decomposition and specifically cited pages 20, 28, 39, and 49.

**Rationale for objection:**

The parent believes the book is inappropriate for elementary children.

**Summary of Reconsideration Committee Information**

**Date of Reconsideration Committee Meeting:** Tuesday, October 18, 2011

**Committee Chairperson:** Dr. Travis Bracht, Director of Student Learning

|                           |                               |                          |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------|
| <b>Committee Members:</b> | Brien McCarthy, Principal     | Tammy Steimel, Parent    |
|                           | Sherri Lorton, Content Leader | Carrie Kuhlmann, Parent  |
|                           | Sandra Hendricks, Librarian   | Debbie Pryor, Teacher    |
|                           | Shanna Bradley, Librarian     | Jodi Fitzgerald, Teacher |

**Committee Decision:** The committee voted 8 to 0 in favor of the book remaining in the libraries at the elementary level.

**Committee Rationale:** This book is most appropriate for upper elementary students however, given the grade spans present in our elementary schools, grades K through 5, it is reasonable that there are students mature enough to handle reading this particular book while in elementary school. It is a book frequently checked out in our elementary libraries; and is often a book that reluctant readers can successfully complete. The committee pointed to part 2, section c of Regulation 6241 that states: "No parent(s)/guardian(s) have the right to determine reading, viewing, or listening matter for students other than their own children."

**NOTE:** Regulation 6241 states that when the reconsideration committee upholds material from challenge, the material cannot be challenged again, at that level, for a period of five years. Therefore, at the elementary level, the fact that this book is included within our libraries cannot be challenged again until October 18, 2016.

**INSTRUCTIONAL SERVICES**

**Form 6241**

**Instruction**

**Challenged Materials**

**REVIEW OF INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS**

Type of material (book, film, pamphlet, etc.): Book

Title of material: Scary Stories to Tell in the Dark

Author: Alvin Schwartz

Publisher: Harper Collins

Your name, address, telephone number: Becca Green 1621 Dahlia Ct. (314) 288-6861  
St. Charles, MO 63303

Do you have a child in the school concerned? yes

Complainant also represents others: N/A

(organization-name) \_\_\_\_\_

(other group-identify) \_\_\_\_\_

To what part of the material do you object? Cite words, page numbers: 20, 28 (last paragraph)  
39, 49

Why do you object to this material? references to graphic death  
corpses, decomposition, etc. is extremely inappropriate for  
Are you familiar with the range of materials used in the school system on this topic? elementary school  
N/A children.

Do you approve of presenting a diversity of points of view about this material in the classroom?  
I approve of diverse literature of an age appropriate nature

Should this be withdrawn from all <sup>elementary</sup> students? Yes X No \_\_\_\_\_

Rebecca Green 314-288-6861 9/5/11  
Signature of Complainant Date

\* stlouismom78@hotmail.com Dr. Pam Sloan  
Please give/send this information to: Superintendent

4545 Central School Rd  
St. Charles, MO 63304  
Address

\* please email me to confirm receipt of this document.  
Thank you.